



## Stranger Hellthings by Nellblazer

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**Genre:** F/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Alfie Constantine, Eleven | Jane Hopper, John Constantine, You

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**Summary:**

When people go missing in the Welsh forests, you and John come up against a monster you've never faced before or even heard of. Guess your world's going Upside Down.

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# Stranger Hellthings

## Author's Note:

Chapter Warnings: Minor angst, unsanitary conditions, gross subject matter basically.

(Set after the events of Chapter 44 of the Rockabye series. See original series if you want to catch up!)

Proof reading errors possible.

Happy Halloween everyone!!! Hope you enjoy this 500+ Tumblr follower celebration piece!



“Time to go, love,” John shakes you awake. “Duty calls.”

“Wha....” you blink. “But I’m sleeping.”

“We gotta go,” John urges.

You can tell by the tone of his voice it was something serious.

“What’s happening?” you sit up, rubbing your eyes.

“Chas just text me, there’s something terrorising a local Welsh town and lots of people are dying. We need to scarper there sharpish,” John’s already pulling on his clothes. “I’ll get the little’un to Chas’.”

You look to Alfie who’s still fast asleep, his wild blond hair all over the place. You’d all drifted off watching films in the bed last night.

“Is it that bad?” you ask.

“Oh aye, seems like quite a vicious monster by all accounts,” John nods, struggling with his tie in his half dazed stupor. “Took two kids last night.”

“Shit,” you murmur, getting out of the bed and tugging on some jeans. “Alright, I’m coming.”

John gently nudges your son until he opens his eyes, yawning loudly in protest, “Come on, sprog, we’re going to Uncle Chas’.”

“Want mum,” Alfie protests, grabbing for you.

You relent, turning the two way hug into a threeway and kissing his head, “Mum and Dad need to go save people. It’s important. Uncle Chas will look after you.”

“But the bad thing will get you,” Alfie pulls at his pyjamas nervously. “The bad thing with teeth. You’ll be upside down and it’ll be scary.”

It still mildly freaked you out that your son had precognitive powers but you supposed having most of the power of God meant he would never just be an average child. It had helped you on a few occasions, the sentences that he’d begun to say and the prophecies he’d foretold but you couldn’t help but feel sad that he had to know these things in the first place. He was only seven for Christ’s sake.

“Alfie, tell Dad what you see,” John cradles him closer. “It might help us. It might help us save people.”

“It’s big and scary and it has looooooads of teeth,” Alfie demonstrates holding his hands out wide. “And the absolutely ginormous thing that’s upside down. It’s hungry. It wants to *eat* people!”

“That sounds horrible,” John wrinkles his nose dramatically. “Well me and your mum are gonna put a stop to it. Promise.”

“Because you’re superheroes?” Alfie asks.

John looks like he wants to laugh so badly at the mere suggestion but he keeps it together. You find it sweet that Alfie thought of you both

so highly. You definitely weren't up to the Justice League's standard of heroism, that's for sure.

"Yeah, sprog, that's exactly right. So be a good lad for me and for Chas, okay? We'll be back before you know it."

John peppers your son with kisses on his cheeks before setting him down and taking his hand, "Say bye to your mum, Alfie."

"Bye bye!" he waves. "Love you!"

You might be prejudiced but you think your kid is the cutest thing in the world. You'd never had a bad day with him yet. He was always so polite and so well mannered. How this child came from you and John, you'll never know but you loved your little family intensely.

"Love you too, munchkin," you wave.

"Oh and love?" John says before he walks out of the door to go to Chas'. "*Tollas argentum et armis.*"

You'd taken to talking in Latin around Alfie when you didn't want him to eavesdrop on the conversation. John had just told you to fetch the silver and your weapons. He obviously must have thought it was a werewolf.

You spend about thirty minutes gathering everything into holsters, bandoleers and dufflebags as well as packing food essentials before you hefted it out into the main room and put your leather jacket on as well as your combat boots. Leather clothing made it hard for things to bite your limbs off.

John returns, grabbing as many bags as he can in one sitting before dragging them out to the car and you set off as quickly as possible.

"So is there anything else we should know?" you ask, as you leave the boundaries of the Manchester area.

"That our lad gets his cuteness from his Dad?" John smirks whilst driving.

"I think someone inhaled too much agrimony last night," you quip

back. "Clearly it's affected your brain."

"You wound me, lass," John pouts. "But to answer your question, most Chas could find out was that the thing's humanoid and has plenty of teeth. Like....rows and rows of teeth."

"Sounds like what Alfie described then," you muse. "Not a werewolf."

"No and more's the pity. Werewolves are easy to deal with," John grinds his teeth slightly like he always does when he's thinking. "Not got a frigging clue what this thing might be. Did you?"

"I packed everything," you nod.

"You're a diamond, you are," John grins at you. "Always prepared. What the bloody hell did I ever do before you came into me life, eh?"

"Got hurt a lot?"

"Not arguing that," he laughs. "Shouldn't be too much longer. Get some more kip while you can, love."

You thought that was probably a good idea as you sat back in the seat, leaning your head against the rest and trying to drift off again. No use being overtired when you had monsters to take care of.

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You arrived on the fringe of Gywdyr Forest sometime just before lunch.

John insisted you both eat a little something to keep you going and you got the feeling he thought this was a big job. He was nervous and you hadn't seen him nervous in a while.

Since the siege on the warehouse, only low level things ever dared to stir up trouble any more. Demons had all but stopped their assault on the mortal plain and only the vampires and other supes were still

active.

“Wish I knew what it were,” John mutters, jamming a sandwich into his mouth. “Don’t like going in blind.”

“We’ll find a way,” you assure him. “Not failed yet, right?”

“You and I have very different definitions of failure, lass,” John snorts. “I’ve died multiple times.”

“Well you’re just an idiot,” you snort.

“I’m *your* idiot,” John nudges your side affectionately. “Feels right weird to be going back into stuff I don’t know. I forget how much our life has changed sometimes.”

“Having the second Messiah for a son sure helps quieten down things,” you smile.

“Aye, loveable little bugger,” John smiles fondly. “Come on then, love, before I lose me nerve and go full scaredy cat.”

You both got out of the car, strapping yourselves up, looking like professional bounty hunters more than hikers but you tramped into the woodland anyway. You spent a good hour looking for the landmark where the children had last been seen, some standing stones. Eventually you found them and the remnants of the crime scene tape that fluttered from the poles.

“There’s blood here,” John wrinkles his nose, looking at one of the stones. “Lots of it. Arterial spray. Fuck, doesn’t look good, Star.”

“They haven’t found any bodies so gotta assume....” you trail off.

“They’ve been eaten,” John finishes. “Bones n’ all. Nothing more we can do other than to stop it happening again. This is nothing like anything I’ve ever heard before. That description and this...method.”

“Something new?” you ask with trepidation.

“Google it, love,” John nods to you. “Maybe there was summat in a different place that just made its way to the UK. Gotta see if there’s

any similar reports somewhere.”

What the hell did you even put for something like that? You end up searching teeth, monster, kids, woods and disappearance. That turns up a bunch of stuff about legends of tooth fairies and such but after going to the last page, you find a long dead forum relating to an incident that happened in Hawkins, Indiana in 1983/4.

Looking further into it, seems a kid disappeared and a monster that sounded like your one was terrorising the county. Government cover up, explanations that would win a creative writing contest...yadda yadda....usual stuff but appears the residents of Hawkins were venting their own truths on this forum. Their truths were *much* more interesting.

“You look like you’ve got something, lass,” John studies your expression.

“Check this article out,” you show him your phone.



# The Hawkins

Sunday, November 13, 1983

## The Boy Who Came Back To

The former missing child Will Byers has been found after a week of searching. He is presently in stable condition in Hawkins General Hospital. Byers' mother, Joyce Byers, alleges that Will was the subject of a secret government program run by the Hawkins National Laboratory. The allegation comes amidst a massive investigation into the hidden organization and its elaborate experimentation in perusal of mind control.

The abuse detailed in the first report includes

prolonged physical duress and psychological interrogation.

This government sanctioned torture has provoked outrage amongst the American people. In a statement issued yesterday morning, Ives mentioned her "disgust" with the organization saying "our own American people are being treated like the enemy... we should be directing our attention to the real target, the Soviets, not our own daughters and sons." Under legal advice, Brenner has issued no comment on...

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"Will Byers," John reads. "What does this have to do with...."

You swipe to the forums where his eyes widen, "Now *that* sounds more like it. Demogorgon eh? Sounds like kids spending too much time playing Dungeons and Dragons."

"Make fun all you like but it sounds exactly like what we're looking for," you cross your arms.

He's about to speak when you hear a rustling to your left and

immediately get out your machete. You're on edge and your responses are super quick right now, looking for the disturbances in the tree line, trying to see what was coming. It was like the entire forest just fell quiet and it was absolutely terrifying.

You turn in the direction of another sound, desperately peering into the mid afternoon gloom of the densely packed trees until.....it was too late.

The tree you'd glossed over, half of it suddenly moved, the creature the colour of the bark. It crawled with purpose, slowly at first but picking up speed. What you thought was a beak suddenly opened like a flower to reveal rows of jagged teeth along the fronds.

"WHAT THE EVERLIVING FUCK?!" John startles, drawing its attention. "You are one ugly bastard!"

The only successful thing about John being a complete loudmouth was that it charged for him, giving you ample time to run behind it, slashing at its back as you dove to one side. It shrieked in an ear piercing sort of way, the maw quivering in pain.

"Good shot, lass!" John cries, using fire to drive the Demogorgon back.

It obviously hates the flames because it rears, scrambling almost away from John and slinking back towards the tree you first saw it at. There was a curious moment where you could swear one of its legs disappeared from view *into* the bark.

It makes one last snapping lunge where you batter it with the machete edge and it whimpers before full sliding back into the tree.

"It's a portal!" you point.

"Quick, Star! Follow it!" John urges. "Job's not done yet!"

You edge towards the point where the Demogorgon vanished and slide your foot into the gap. There's a marked change in temperature where your ankle had gone from sight. It's cold and arid.

"I didn't say stick your bloody limbs in there!" John frowns as he

catches up. "Could've had it ripped off."

"I'm just doing what you do," you shrug. "Go into things blindly and hope for the best."

"I taught you better than that, love," John shakes his head before bodily throwing himself through the portal.

*Hypocrite.*

You jump in after him and it's like your entire world is flipped and righted. You get the greatest sense of nausea before you're able to focus.

"Shitting hell," you hear John say softly. "What is this place?"

It looks, for all the world, like you never left the spot in the woods. It was exactly the same, just....cold. Cold and foggy with spores that danced in the dim light. It was oppressive in a way, like a type of hayfever but god it was so *cold*. The air hurt your lungs.

"It's what Alfie said," you shiver and John pulls you into his side automatically. "It's like our plain but it's....upside down."

"Upside down and scary," John repeats your son's words. "He wasn't wrong. We have to close this portal so nothing can come back through. No doubt there are openings all over the world."

"How do we do it?" you ask, turning to find the tree again but your heart sinks. "John, look."

The opening had been taken over by vines and roots, rendering the portal unusable.

"Bloody fucking hell!" John swears. "Bastard place!"

"What do you we do then?" you look around yourself.

John rakes his hand through his hair, "Shit....um.....guess we just.....find another opening to get back?"

"And how long will that take us?" you throw your hands up. "If

this...Upside Down is a reflection of our world then we could be wandering for years.”

“Ohhh this is bollocks,” John groans in frustration. “Shoulda just burned the fucking tree down rather than chasing after the bloody Demogorgon.”

“Is it gone anyway?” you ask. “I can’t hear it any more.”

“Hope so,” John mutters. “Come on, love. No good standing around here out in the open.”

With his hand clutching yours tightly, you walk into the swirling mist with no idea how you were going to get out of this one.

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You’d probably walked to the top of Wales by now, you could see the murky Irish sea undulating ahead, a thick film of pollen and spores surfing on top of it.

“I’m tired,” you announce.

“Aye, I know. Me too,” John sighs. “We need to find somewhere safe to rest.”

But was there anywhere safe? There were still houses and buildings and shops around but they appeared almost...mouldy? If that was the right term that is....

“Fuck,” John coughs. “This is worse than the lung cancer. You bearing up okay, lass?”

“Feel like I’m swallowing tar every time I breathe,” you admit.

“Rough ain’t it?” John nods. “I think that’s a good place to hole up for some rest.”

He points to a bed store that seems to have shutters outside.

“Better than nothing,” you shrug.

When you get in there, John makes a point to check all the rooms for signs of monsters, to barricade all exits and to bring the shutters down, dragging them manually before bolting the front door.

“God this place is a shit tip,” John frowns. “Reminds me of me first flat after running away from home.”

“We’ll make do,” you sigh, collapsing on the cleanest looking bed.

“We’ll take it in shifts,” John lies down next to you. “You sleep first, love. I’ll wake you up in a few hours then I’ll take a nap. I don’t trust this place.”

“I don’t think I can sleep when I’m this on edge,” you admit.

John leans over and kisses you softly, “Sleep spell?”

“At least we’ll both be well rested after using it rather than naturally,” you reason.

“Aye, good thinking,” John smiles slightly. “You always were the clever one. *Dormi.*”

You felt asleep with John cradling you tightly.

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“Wake up, lass,” John shakes you.

You feel rested at least but that feeling of apprehension and dread returned instantly.

“Everything safe?” you ask.

“Not a peep,” John assures you.

"I hate this place," you murmur, sitting up and leaning against the headboard.

John sighs heavily before settling on your lap, using your thighs as a pillow, "Me too and I miss our boy."

"You've become very sentimental you know," you try and make a joke.

"Everyone always says fatherhood changes a man," John shrugs, a tiny smile playing at the corner of his lips. "Would you rather I was still the cheatin' no good bastard I was before I met you?"

"Not in the slightest," you snort. "I would never have come near you."

"Smart girl," John laughs. "I just....he's the only thing I ever did in me life that's pure and good. I miss his little giggle."

"We'll get back to him," you stroke John's hair. "Have faith."

"I've gone soft," John buries his face into your leg. "I'm losing me edge. I can't do this shit any more. I'm not in the game regularly enough and I'm making rookie errors. Should've burned the tree."

"Stop torturing yourself," you pinch his side making him squirm a little. "What's done is done and now we do the thing we always do. Figure out a plan by the seat of our arses."

"I think I'd just like to sleep now," John says quietly.

"Alright," you nod before using the spell and his eyelids flutter closed.

Now you're the only one awake, just listening to the nothing. John's steady breathing seemed so loud in comparison. It was like all your senses were on hyper alert, just waiting for something out of place.

You kept glancing at your watch, staring at the seconds and minutes and hours ticking by. It was both tedious and highly draining. Being so jumpy for any kind of movement meant you were tiring faster and you wondered just how long John had been able to stand it for

earlier.

After around three and a half hours, there was a slight scuffing noise at the rear of the shop and your head whipped round. There was a tiny movement, a roll of a shoulder perhaps but it was hunched to the floor. When you looked closer, it seemed to be more of an animal than the humanoid Demogorgon.

Slowly you stood up, hands ready in preparation, feet planted firmly so you were protecting John's unconscious body. The creature noticed, prowling forward onto the main concourse of the showroom floor before you fully saw it in the dim lighting.

It was almost like a dog version of the Demogorgon, same petal maw but more of a quadruped body. That didn't mean you were going to give it much more thought than that.

You conjured a bolt of electricity, throwing it like some Olympian god before it struck true, the creature yowling and spasming before it hit the floor, limp as a noodle, the mouth draping open.

Immediately you shake John with such urgency that he almost hits you when he wakes up, expecting you to be the danger.

"Shitting hell, Star!" he panics. "What?!"

"Creatures," you explain, dragging him up. "We need to move."

It was a good job you didn't rest on your laurels because a few more of those dog creatures, attracted by the noise, seemed to come from nowhere.

"Get the door," you push John towards the main entrance. "I'll hold them off."

"The bloody hell you will," John growls.

"I know what kills them so just *fucking do it*," you snarl.

You rarely got bossy with John so when you used that voice, he knew there was no argument to be had. He did what you asked and started removing the barricade hastily.

You began letting loose fronds of lightning, zapping anything that came too close. The Demodogs seemed to back off a little, regrouping back by the corner and you suddenly saw behind the other door that there was a large hole in the floor that John hadn't covered up. No wonder they got in.

"All done, let's mush," John urges, wrenching the shutter up.

You decide to just set the place on fire to stop them from following you. Sure it may attract more things to the location in the end but you planned to be far away when that happened.

You and John just fled, his new trenchcoat flapping in the breeze as you hared down the overgrown cobbled streets of Conwy Bay down to the sea.

"What now?" John looks this way and that. "Cross the sea? Get a boat? Try our luck in mainland England?"

A flash of thunder overhead caught your attention as you looked across the bay and you let out a scream that had John clutching you tightly.

"What is it?!" John shouts, alarmed.

You just point with a shaking finger into the sky and he turns, his face draining of the remaining colour.

In the red storm clouds, illuminated for just an instant every time lightning sparked, a great monster, bigger than anything you'd ever seen loomed. It was almost spider like but it must be gargantuan to span so much of your field of view.

"Fuck me sideways," John gapes.

You feel its influence...there was no other way to describe it. Cold was pressing on your mind, trying to invade your skull. It was like vines creeping up your skin, probing for any weakness.

"John, I...." you fade out a little.

He seems equally as afflicted, his skin like ice where he was gripping



you.

You may have passed out, you weren't sure.

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When you awoke, you certainly weren't in Wales any more. Nothing looked even vaguely European.

"John?" you call, looking about yourself.

He's bent over the bonnet of what appears to be an American muscle car. He's out but he's still breathing at least.

"John!" you shout near his ear and he wakes up.

"M'up, love. I'm up," he slides off the bonnet, righting himself.

"What the fuck was that?" you ask, staring at the sky but the creature is nowhere to be seen. "How did we get away? How are we alive? Where are we?"

"One sodding question at a time, bit," John shakes the cobwebs out of his mind. "I can't keep up. Feel like someone's taken an ice cream maker to me head."

"It was so cold," you involuntarily shiver. "We should not be alive. That thing...I think it wanted to control us."

"No doubt about it, love. That were mind control. Felt it enough times in me life. I get the sense that were the big bloody boss of this place."

"Then why are we still standing?" you throw up your hands. "We were easy pickings just then. Totally unprepared."

"I don't know, Star, I don't bloody know," John huffs but you know

he's more frustrated with himself. "I'm gonna try some summonings to see what's going on and if we can get some assistance. Still got demons that owe me, like."

"Well let's get in that building first," you point. "Doing spellcasting out in the road is just asking for trouble."

"Aye, right as ever," John nods before peering at the building. "Hawkins Middle School, huh? Wait, wasn't that the um....that article? The one about the missing boy?"

"Yeah yeah," you perk up. "Hawkins, Indiana. That's where I found the stuff about the Demogorgon."

"There was that one comment," John racks his brains. "About the psychic girl? That she helped close the gate here?"

You're surprised he remembered. You didn't take in all the comments, only the ones pertaining to the creature. John's nose for research and seeing the wider picture always astonished you.

"I think so?"

"Maybe she's still around? Maybe she helped us," John reasons. "It were only thirty years ago so she'd be middle aged right?"

"Who's to say she's still alive, John?" you shrug. "Or even in the same realm."

"I've got enough in me pockets to use a searching spell for psychic vibrations," John starts patting down his coat. "But let's get inside first, bit. Too exposed out here and I don't want the spell to latch on to that big beastie if I can help it."

You walk with him, stepping forward confidently until you hear the sound of something splintering under your feet. Sounds like glass.

You look down and see some Deirdre Barlow type big thick rimmed glasses that have shattered under your boot. These definitely had to be from the 80s. Maybe it was one of the original Hawkins group that had gotten stuck in here.

"Come on, love. I don't like dallying here," John urges quietly, pulling you into the gymnasium where you see the remnants of a kids paddling pool just laid out in the centre.

"What exactly happened here?" you wonder out loud.

"Maybe water's a conduit," John muses, squatting to inspect the murky water further. "You know you can get to Hell that way, why not this place? Both are on plains of damnation I'm guessing."

"So this was an old portal?" you examine the paddling pool, leaning over. "Can we use it to get back?"

"Doubt it," John shakes his head. "Summat very powerful has to happen to tear holes in dimensions or *someone* powerful. I'm not nearly at that level."

"Oh don't sell yourself short," you tease. "You do alright."

"Aye, love, but I'm not Myrddin," John snorts. "Bastard had an extra thousand years on me."

"So you're saying you're young and stupid?"

"Lass, I'll throw you in that pool in a second," John huffs playfully. "Button it."

"Fine," you roll your eyes. "Can the water amp your scrying spell?"

"Actually it might do," John nods impressed. "Nice spot, Star and to think....that pretty mind coulda been wasted on rock music and exclusively green M&Ms."

"I was never a diva," you pout.

"Nah, divas aren't that great in the sack," he winks.

The banter is helping both of your nerves. You honestly couldn't be two more quintessentially British magi if you tried. Insult humour and black comedy, works a treat in dangerous situations.

Maybe you should've kept your mind on the task however, because

you didn't see the vine that shot out of the pool and wrapped around your neck, dragging you down into the black scum filled water. You wished you hadn't tried to shout because it filled your mouth and it felt like it was actively trying to worm its way down your throat.

You couldn't see, you could barely hear anything but the churning water.

It wasn't until there was a flash of what seemed like sunlight that the vine scurried away from you, releasing your neck. Strong hands lifted you out of the water and you ended up half vomiting on the floor, pieces of plant detritus being forced out of your mouth.

"Cough it up, love," John instructs, smacking your back. "All of it. I don't care how nasty you think it is, chuck it all up. Every last bit. I'm not having some Alien recreation, you hear? Who knows what those vines were doing to you."

Some of the stems were still trying to cling to your oesophagus so John ends up having to jam his fingers into your throat to force you to be sick over and over until your windpipe is raw and your eyes are streaming with tears.

After scanning you with his hand, John relaxes a little, "All gone I think. Good. Fucking hell that were terrifying. Everything in this place is trying to kill us or use us as food or some kind of breeding factory."

"Shit that didn't help my fear of drowning at all," you splutter. "Jesus. I'll never complain you thrust too deep into my mouth again."

John laughs loudly before reining himself in, "I fucking love that you have some humour about it, love. I love you, don't you ever scare me like that again. I've had enough of that for one lifetime. Thought we were past it."

"So did I," you shake your head to clear the clinging droplets in your hair. "Now do your damn spell so we can get out, if that girl is even here."

"Aye aye, boss," he kisses your forehead before setting up his ritual.

You just keep an eye out in the meantime, keeping a distance away from the pool as you repeatedly scan the entrance points, just in case. You got lucky with the amount of time in the bed store but now things knew you were here, you wouldn't be safe for long.

*"Estaherus ulatway nerageen ahmus nat,"* John chants, the candles he pulled out of his unnaturally deep pockets set at North, South, East and West. *"Locknas vanaheel ithigos cash."*

It was like a radar pulse that emanated out from him in sequenced waves. You looked about, trying to see if any blips occurred as you watched it stretch out well beyond the confines of the school building until you saw it in the distance.

A tiny spark that flared into a human silhouette.

"She's actually here," you point it out.

"Seems like the universe isn't all about stamping on me bollocks today then," John manages a cocky grin before getting up, focusing his beam in the direction of the form before it suddenly goes. "What the....where did she go?"

"Why are you trying to find me?" a girl just shy of her teens says from behind you.

She has unruly curly hair and she's dressed like her idol is Sigourney Weaver.

"You're her, aren't you?" John asks. "The girl they called 'El'?"

"Yeah," she says a bit off handedly, still wary of you both. "Why did you call me?"

"How are you.....what year is it?" you try to understand.

How can she still look like a little girl when it's been thirty years since the incident at Hawkins?

"The Upside Down exists at all times," she tries to explain. "It is all years and one year."

“That doesn’t help, lass,” John shakes his head. “We need to get out. We were trying to stop a Demogorgon from attacking a town and we got trapped here. The doorway was closed when we tried to go back.”

“I know. I know how you got here,” she fiddles with her overalls. “I stopped it from hurting you and brought you closer. The door was nearby, you didn’t need to call me.”

“I’m sorry, El,” John says seriously. “I didn’t know. We didn’t guess that’s what you meant but thank you for saving us from whatever that was.”

“The Mind Flayer,” El replies, her eyes shooting to the ceiling quickly. “You’ll have got its attention now. You need to go.”

“Are you coming with us?” you ask. “Are you stuck here yourself?”

“I need to be here,” she shakes her head. “I have....friends. My friends are waiting for my help. I can’t leave yet. I’m waiting for....Mike.”

“Is Mike your boyfriend?”

“I....kinda....I think so,” she says awkwardly. “I’ve never had one.”

A boom shakes the gymnasium and you see the red lightning start flashing overhead.

“It’s coming,” El announces. “You need to leave.”

“Where’s the door?” John says hurriedly.

“In the woods, straight out of the gym and the biggest tree you can see,” she points. “Go. I need to hide.”

You don’t want to leave El on her own. She seems so naïve and innocent. How could she be capable of fending off such a monstrous being alone?

“I’m more than I appear,” she seems to sense your reluctance and puts her hand on yours, squeezing it. “Really. I promise. I’ll be...a-okay.” She flashes you two uncoordinated thumbs up, like she’s not

used to the action.

“Star, we need to go. Now,” John says, looking up through the high windows as the flashes show the great long limbs of the Mind Flayer approaching.

He takes your hand and runs with you out of the gym towards the woods but a smoky tendril stops your path and you skid to a halt, feeling that same cold press against your mind.

“NO!” El shouts, following behind you and shoving her hand up to the heavens. “You won’t take them. They don’t belong to you.”

“Lass, don’t try to save us, save yourself,” John cries, trying to move towards her but she extends her hand backwards and John is thrown back into your body where you catch him clumsily.

“I think she can take care of herself somehow,” you note the telekinetic power.

“Run!” El tells you before turning her attention back to the Mind Flayer who’d moved its great body down closer to the ground to try and attack directly. “And I said NO!”

Concentrating as she does, the Mind Flayer rears in pain and you know she’s deliberately harming it to give you time. It concerns you that she’s started bleeding from the nose but she carries on like she’s used to it.

“Let’s go,” you push John towards the treeline, still feeling the cold influence tickling at the base of your skull.

You sprint in desperation, eyes raised for the largest tree you can see, almost tripping on the roots beneath your feet. You hear snarling coming from all sides and know the Mind Flayer has sent everything after you.

“Shit, keep moving!” John yells.

Your lungs feel like they’re screaming, pressing tightly against your rib cage as your heart practically explodes with the effort of keeping up with your mad dash.

“There!” John points and you see the tree up ahead.

The vines are already starting to try and block the portal but that bit of horror at not making it gives you more stamina and you practically rugby tackle your way through the bark, pieces splintering as you sloppily spill through the other side and into lush autumnal colours.

John falls on your back, driving the wind out of you before he rolls off, speedily turning around and blasting the tree with his hellfire lighter, amping it up until it burned fiercely.

You could hear the yowls and shrieks from the other side as things attempted to follow you but the fire kept them at bay.

John just held you tightly in his arms until the tree had burned to ash, leaving only glowing embers in its wake.

“I didn’t want to leave her there,” you say, watching the smoke curl up from the forest floor. “I know she was powerful but that didn’t feel....”

“Right,” John finishes for you. “Aye it didn’t. Maybe I’m just a mad paternal bastard these days but I wanted to make sure she was safe.”

“I’m sure she will be,” you reason. “If everything happens at the same time and...not at the same time then we know she’s alright.”

“Is she though?” John looks at you, savaging his bottom lip.

You take out your phone, trying to look for any mention of El until you come across a photo from the Hawkins Snow Ball 1984 for the school and see a photo.

“Look,” you smack John in the bicep with your hand. “There she is.”

She’s dancing with a boy that you assume is Mike. She looks happy at least.

“Thank fuck for that,” John leans over and kisses your cheek before collapsing into the leaves. “Jesus Christ I need to retire. I’m getting too old for this shit, love.”



“You’re still in your seventies, you’re young,” you laugh.

“Says the bird in her mid thirties,” John grumbles.

“You’re only as old as the woman you feel,” you say wisely. “Now, let’s get home. I want to crawl into bed and not come out for a few days while my lungs repurify.”

“I know a spell for that,” John offers.

“Of course you do,” you laugh. “Of course you do.”

“Guess I’ll hold off on the ciggies til I get back.”

“Probably for the best.”

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Chas ends up driving Alfie over, the pair of you two tired to even attempt to get back behind the wheel again after driving back from Wales.

You’re just both almost spark out on the bed, energy drained and still covered in muck and spores and unidentified liquid from the Upside Down. You didn’t care though, you were home.

“What the fuck happened to you two?!” Chas cries, his hands over Alfie’s ears to stop him from listening in.

“Demogorgons, Mindflayers...” John starts.

“Don’t forget the Demodogs,” you add.

“Can’t forget them, no,” John nods. “Job is done, mate. Just got trapped in another realm for a while that I can safely say is worse than Hell.”

“And you’re both okay?” Chas looks at your dishevelled state.

“Traumatised but yeah, okay,” John holds up a hand limply. “You can go next time.”

“Fuck no,” Chas snorts. “You both look like shit. You can have your kid back now if that helps. He ended up escaping and multiplying food in a food bank for the homeless.”

“Really?!” you sit up.

“No, you idiot,” Chas rolls his eyes. “We watched Transformers and had a really intense game of Kerplunk. He’s a normal kid, not Life of Brian.”

“Chas, in the politest possible terms, fuck off,” you gesture at him.

“Oooooo,” Chas says in a mock offended voice. “Well it must be bad if *you’re* swearing at me. Fine fine, I get the hint, I’ll leave you to it. Rest up you two.”

“Bye mate,” John calls lazily. “Cheers for taking care of me lad.”

“You were upside down,” Alfie says after Chas leaves. “Now you’re right side up.”

“Aye, sprog, we are. Come 'ere,” John motions, shedding his clothes so as not to transfer any of the Upside Down’s secretions to him.

You follow suit.

Alfie crawls up the bed, settling in his usual place in between you before looking inquisitively from you to John, “Did you save people?”

“We stopped any one else from being hurt,” John assures him.

“But *you’re* hurt,” Alfie places a hand on both of your chests. “Feels icky. I want to help.”

Whenever your son used his power, it was a little unnerving being reminded that he *was* the second Messiah after all but when your lungs suddenly eased up and it felt like they’d been scrubbed clean, you were grateful.

“Mum was really ill,” Alfie frowns. “There were things in her tummy that shouldn’t have been there.”

“Ah bollocks, looks like we didn’t get it all,” John sighs, throwing his arm over the both of you. “Good job, lad. She’s okay now.”

“Is the other thing in her tummy supposed to be there, Dad?” Alfie asks.

John screws up his face in confusion and so do you, “What do you mean, Alfie?”

“There’s something alive in there,” he points underneath your belly button. “But it’s not upside down. It’s right side up.”

John’s eyes just go wide, “No...can’t be.”

He practically leaps over yourself and Alfie, laying behind you and using the doctor spell to scan your body before he makes a strangled noise and starts laughing.

“What?!” you say in confusion.

“Yeah lad, it’s meant to be there,” John winks at your son. “Considering we’ve not been very careful lately and we had talked about it a year ago.”

“Talked about what, Dad?”

“Am I?!” you turn to John, looking bewildered.

“You’re gonna have a brother or sister, sprog. Your mum’s pregnant,” John grins widely before kissing your neck up to your cheek. “Well I’m bloody happy you removed the Upside Down’s things now. Wouldn’t want a baby Demogorgon would we?”

“Oh shut up,” you tap John on the nose. “Am I really?”

“Aye bit, you really are,” John’s eyes are twinkling before he whispers into your ear. “A nice normal pregnancy this time.”

“Is anything ever normal with us?” you quirk up an eyebrow.

“Well.....no,” John admits. “But at least I’ll be here the entire time. So what do you think, Alf? Excited?”

“Yeah!” Alfie laughs. “I’ve always wanted a sister!”

“Ah you wanna be a big brother eh?” John bundles you all into a mass hug. “That’s good.”

“I promise to protect you Mum,” Alfie cuddles into you.

“You’re a good boy, Alfie,” you kiss his head fondly. “I guess we’re going to need space for another name on the door.”

“Aye, that we are,” John nods. “I’ll start on it soon.”

As your little family, with one extra arriving, is just content to be on the bed, you never saw the figure on the warehouse CCTV walk up to your sign and trace their fingers along it.

## **The Constantines**

### **John, Star and Alfred.**

The figure laughs to themselves before using a marker to add +1 before stepping back and admiring their work.

“Bitchin’,” they say before turning around and walking back into the gloom of the Manchester dusk.